

**SUMMARY OF THE  
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 16, 1999**

The Transition Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Thursday, September 16, 1999, at 10:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) by teleconference. The meeting was led by its co-chairs, Dr. Charles Brokopp of the UT Department of Health and Ms. Carol Batterton of the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss items from the proposed agenda.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Dr. Brokopp opened the meeting, welcoming participants. He then moved to the agenda which had been distributed earlier.

**INITIAL ASSESSOR TRAINING**

The initial offering of a NELAC laboratory assessor training course was discussed. It was agreed that it is an essential component for realizing uniform laboratory accreditation. Mr. Wibby reviewed issues that he has identified that need resolution for this training.

1. Curriculum: the work of the On-site Assessment committee and the EPA contractor preparing course materials need to be coordinated.
2. Length: plans for the are established by section 2.3.3 of the NELAC standards as shown below.

<b>Day</b>	<b>Content</b>
1	Basic Auditing Techniques and Skills
2	NELAC Overview (Chapter 1 NELAC Standards) Accrediting Authority (Chapter 6) Accreditation Process (Chapter 4) Proficiency Testing (Chapter 2)
3	Quality Systems (Chapter 5)
4	On-Site Assessment (Chapter 3)
5	Course Summary Written Examination

The committee acknowledged that NELAC On-site Assessment committee is strongly committed to this schedule. It was noted that certain of these areas could be designed using approaches that do not require on-site attendance which has the potential to significantly reduce student costs.

3. Cost: this is a serious concern to NELAP accrediting authorities who would be required to send laboratory assessors. Details of this were explored and it was agreed that:

- a. The exact amount of on-site attendance would have a strong impact on course costs; conversely, the amount of advance work, self-study, and other training approaches could significantly lower the on-site component of cost.
  - b. The possibility of obtaining funding in addition to course fees was discussed, including the possibility of grants and participation of private labs at full cost.
4. Attendees: it was agreed that successful participation by all NELAC laboratory assessors is a key element to maintaining reciprocity. Initial limitation to NELAC lab assessors was considered as a capacity issue, but subsequent offerings of the course could include non-NELAC assessors, private/commercial laboratory staff, and other interested parties.
5. Logistics: while it would be most effective to hold training in conjunction with NELAC Annual and Interim meetings, it was agreed that it is expedient to hold the first session as soon as possible. It currently appears that the schedule for preparation of course materials will permit an offering the first quarter of next year.
6. Organizers: currently, materials are being assembled by several organizations and persons. Resolution of the specifics of who would officially offer the course, and related details of location, funding, organizations to actually present the course, organizations to administer the exam, etc. were raised as essential to the success of the effort.

Options for addressing each of these issues were discussed as well as the need to adequately present the On-site Assessment committee-designed course materials at a minimum of expense to Accrediting Authority's lab assessors. It was noted that The On-site Assessment committee is reviewing materials for the first 2 days' sessions prepared under EPA contract and that they appear quite good; subsequent materials are expected shortly. It was agreed that details of this training must be completed for announcement at the Fifth NELAC Interim Meeting and use in a course the first quarter of next year.

In summary, it was agreed that this committee strongly recommend to The On-site Assessment committee that options for course presentation include a 2 day on-site session, with the additional materials prepared such that they can be covered by the students as a "self-study" or similar arrangement; Dr. Brokopp offered to submit this recommendation to The On-site Assessment committee as soon as possible<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, it was agreed that an expanded proposal for course presentation was needed; Mr. Wibby agreed to develop this proposal for the committee by September 30, 1999, for consideration and revision. Once endorsed by this committee, it was suggested that it would be useful for the revised proposal to be discussed with Mr. Longest to communicate with him the status of this essential component of NELAC implementation.

## **TRANSITION ISSUES FROM COMMERCIAL LABORATORIES**

Mr. Parr reviewed some of the information he has gleaned regarding misinformation on the current status of NELAC/NELAP implementation. It was agreed that senior staff of NELAP Accrediting Authorities (AAs) who have participated in the development NELAC should ensure that their staff, at all levels, are adequately informed as to status and plans for implementing the NELAC standards. Ms. Mourrain noted that this is a concern that the current NELAP AAs have included on their agenda for their next teleconference. It was also suggested that there be postings on the NELAC web site to ensure consistent and open communication at this critical phase of NELAC development.

Additionally, a letter to Mr. Longest detailing one laboratory's difficulties with NELAC implementation was discussed. It was agreed that each of the issues raised are being addressed and that a response from each of the NELAP AAs mentioned would be assembled by Dr. Brokopp, to be forwarded to Dr. Pearson, NELAC chair.

#### **INTERPRETATION OF STANDARDS**

This issue had been raised at NELAC V, regarding resolution of potential differences in interpretation of the NELAC standards by a laboratory and the responsible AA. Ms. Mourrain noted that this issue is being addressed by the NELAC Accrediting Authority Review Board, and that the AA will have the responsibility for final decisions in the case of differences in interpretation.

#### **RECIPROCITY**

Details of first-round sequencing of primary and secondary accreditations, and the necessary waivers for primary accreditors was raised. Ms. Mourrain noted that this issue was also raised at NELAC V; she will add this to the Accrediting Authorities group agenda.

#### **ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS IN ACCREDITING AUTHORITIES GROUP MEETING**

It was asked if it would be helpful for a member of this committee to participate in the teleconferences by NELAP AAs. Since there are many unresolved issues being aggressively addressed by this group, it was suggested that they publish the solutions to the NELAC web site as soon as they are available in order speed dissemination of the solutions.

**ACTION ITEMS  
TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING  
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<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Dr. Brokopp will recommend to The On-site Assessment committee that the 5 day assessor training accomodate 3 days initial study that could be done without travel.	
2.	Mr. Wibby will draft a detailed proposal for training course presentation for the committee.	9/30
3.	Dr. Brokopp will assemble NELAP AA responses to stated laboratory difficulties for forwarding to, and discussion with, Dr. Pearson.	9/24
4.	Ms. Batterson will draft for Ms. Mourrain an Email outlining recommended options for AAs to communicate NELAP implementation issues.	

**PARTICIPANTS**  
**TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**SEPTEMBER 16, 1999**

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